

Giant cable companies should not be permitted to grow larger. Further consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules that must be re-established to serve the public interest.

The concentration of power and control over distribution of media is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are under the operation of a handful of giant corporations.

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 50 percent of the national market. This level of concentration in the cable industry will lead to higher consumer rates and

lower quality
service.

In my own town,
Charter
Communications rules
the roost. As is
common, we can only
get our cable
computer hookup as
a \"package\" with
cable TV. We had to
disconnect and hide
the cable to keep
our kids from
watching programming
we consider
inappropriate.

Prices are high and
keep increasing. We
are asking ourselves
if it is really
worth it, even
though having the
internet means my
husband can do some
of his work from
home. I do a lot of
volunteer work in
the schools, and the
huge cost of a
computer connection
means a huge
disadvantage to kids
whose future will be
compromised by a
lack of computer
skills.

Since passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the \"deregulation\" of cable, consumers have seen their rates jump an average of 59 percent -- with some areas experiencing even more dramatic increases.

We are required to buy channels we don't want or need because the cable operators bundle them together. The quality of customer service often reflects the fact that cable television is not a competitive market.

Meanwhile, the cost of cable modem service remains out of reach for many households, holding constant for years and selectively underserving rural and low-income Americans. The American people are watching the digital divide widen even as

the need for access
to high-speed
networks increases.

We are seriously
considering a switch
to DSL, but how many
families can't
afford even the
"basic cable
package" (which is
a bait-and switch
anyway) much less
DSL?

Cable companies have
become less
responsive to the
needs and
requirements of
communities. The
quality of public
accountability in
local franchise
agreements has
declined, as big
companies leverage
their power to
squeeze local
governments.

In many communities,
the truly
independent sources
of local news,
information and
culture come from
the public channels
produced at the

local access

centers.

Unfortunately, local channels lack the resources to produce the programming that citizens want and need.

The last thing we need is to reward the anti-competitive actions of cable giants by permitting greater consolidation in ownership, reducing competition, and encouraging more of the same.

Our so-called \"local news channel\" is owned by a huge conglomerate based in another state, and this corporation has a stranglehold on what \"news\" is broadcast. To get local information we have to rely on the local public radio stations, low-power FM, and independent print media (when we moved here in 1984 there were 2 local

newspapers; they soon merged and are no longer locally owned).